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Reynolds Price

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A Single but Huge Distinction

By

REYNOLDS PRICE



*Together with Tributes to Reynolds Price by Robert Odom,
Melissa Malouf, and William S. Price, Jr., on His
Acceptance of the North Caroliniana Society Award for 1999*

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H. G. Jones, General Editor

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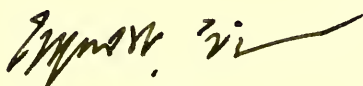
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[continued on inside back cover]

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by

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Reynolds Price', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Reynolds Price

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Chapel Hill 27514-8890
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AND NORTH CAROLINA COLLECTION
1999

NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY IMPRINTS

Number 30

H. G. Jones, General Editor



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Cover photo: The Rodwell-Drake House in which Reynolds Price was born.
(Photos courtesy Bill Edwards, Jerry Cotten, and Alice Cotten, except
cover & p. 2, Reynolds Price; p. 12, Les Todd, Duke University Photography.)



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PART I



A Single but Huge Distinction

By

Reynolds Price

*Delivered before the North Caroliniana Society in the
Friday Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Prior to the Awards Banquet on 9 April 1999*



Macon, North Carolina, 1934. My shadowed mother photographs a complex moment between me and my playmate, John Arthur Bobbitt. Though John Arthur and I are alleged to have been on excellent terms, here we are caught at a moment when I appear to be aiming a blinding stick at his eye; and he plainly has a restraining hand to my throat. Can there be many other unposed snapshots as pregnant with racial ambiguities?

R.P.



A Single but Huge Distinction

Reynolds Price

Thanks, Bill. Like the rest of you, I've been under a gigantic pollen shower for the last few days. I don't think I've ever seen more pollen in my life in Orange County. As a result, I'm a little froggy sounding; but let's say I'm going to get through this somehow.

I couldn't be happier to be here. I'll be introduced at our ensuing dinner, as Bill says; and I'll be saying my formal thanks then. So hang around for those please; and I'll spare you excess gratitude now, a Southern failing. I decided not to give you a formal lecture but to talk to you a bit; and then perhaps we might even have a minute or two left to see if anyone wants to testify from the floor, another venerable Southern tradition.

Any white person who was born in the South and has ever written a poem, a novel, a play, or his or her collected prayers—whatever—is faced at every crossroads visit outside the South with the inevitable question: "Why has the South produced so many good writers?" And of course there are as many answers as there are people who've been asked the question. Walker Percy, for instance, said "We got beat." That's an answer that may work broadly for the Anglo-white portion of the South. It ignores, of course, the fact that the aboriginal Indians began to get murderously beat shortly after us white folks got here; and the black people whom we imported so brutally and for so long have taken continued beating for more than three centuries—a fact that constitutes our most famous, and most poisonous, ongoing curse.

In the course of my own traveling and roadside question-and-answer sessions, my particular answer to the common question used to run along similar lines. And it's really only been in the last decade or so that I've come to realize and strongly believe—I strongly believe everything I believe—that

the South, by which I mean the old Confederate States, has only one unique distinguishing feature: note the word *unique*. (Among numerous possibilities, a conclusion that “the South” consists of the former Confederate states, with a very few border patches, seems to me inevitable, though I have some sympathy with whoever said that the South is the place where nobody calls a Coca-Cola “pop.”)

In the light of that definition, then, I think that the South has only one utterly unique reality which deeply informs all our lives and has most deeply informed the great majority of our writing and our other arts—primarily music, dance, and painting. That uniqueness resides in three centuries of intimate contact—intimate in every sense of the word, good and evil—with an immense and steady African-American presence in the midst of the region. No other piece of America can say as much; and I say it finally, in light of all the ironies involved, with real delight and gratitude.

Other parts of America have distinctive and excellent cuisine. Other parts of America have intense evangelical forms of the Christian religion. Other parts of America have likable accents, and so on *ad infinitum*. But nobody else has the extraordinary racial and cultural melding which we’ve undergone since Dutch traders brought the first slaves to Jamestown very early in the seventeenth century; and I should note that those few areas of the South in which there was little inter-racial contact—largely down the length of the Appalachians—are deeply impressed by that lack.

Again, the huge and ongoing reality of that intimacy (or its absence) has shaped everything white Southerners do—from our vocal rhythms and timbre, the way we move our bodies through space, the way we cook and laugh and weep, the way we think and feel, and all the ways in which we describe the cornerstones of our being. I’m compelled to say here that this overriding reality in our lives has especially informed and enriched my own work from the very start.

I was born in Warren County, North Carolina. In case you don’t know where Warren County is, if you go from Durham or Chapel Hill toward Richmond on I-85, you will depart from North Carolina at the north line of Warren County—your last footfall in this state. When I was born there in 1933, it was a county that contained very few white and a great many black people. I had meant to call the Duke reference department and find out what the census figures for the 1930s were. My mother used to say that the county, in those days, was well over 70 percent black. It was certainly well over 50 percent and remains so even to this day. A Saturday visit to the streets of Warrenton, the county seat, will still show a predominant black presence.

So I was reared in daily and very close contact with African-Americans. One of the most extraordinary things that I’ve realized about my own childhood—and some of you, who are sporting as much white hair as I, may

share this surprise—is the realization that the length of my present lifespan (I'm sixty-six years old and was born sixty-eight years after Appomattox) can be inserted between me and the Civil War with its almost unimaginable death of 620,000 men, between me and effective slavery in the South. That's a startling realization since we tend to think of the Civil War—even those of us who were born and brought up in the cooling remains of the Confederacy—as a distinct reality.

Yet I think it's quite accurate to say that in the Warren County of my childhood, there were numerous salient evidences of the war's devastation—the number of unmarried old white women, for one striking instance (men had been very scarce when they were young); but even more striking and appalling was the visible fact that black people in the Thirties were frequently living in conditions which were physically worse than the conditions that most of them would have experienced a generation earlier in slavery—I'm speaking now only of the conditions, in the 1930s and Forties of black housing, clothing, and food.

So I saw a good deal of their remarkably uncomplaining plight, their endlessly inventive energy; and the facts registered indelibly. One of the first things I wrote, in 1951 when I was seventeen and in high school at Needham Broughton in Raleigh, was a poem that I based on a photograph of an old black man. I no longer have the photograph—and I can't remember exactly what it looked like—but it elicited a response from me which I'd like to read to you as characteristic of what I'd learned till then of our great central reality. It's a short free verse poem, and I don't offer it as a sample of great poetry or even competent poetry but as a product of the thinking of a young Anglo-white person who'd been reared in the intensely formative presence of hundreds of black people. It's called "To a Negro."

This is the dusty head of time
 And all its beauty that is gone.
 This is the face that first was made on a dark remembered day.
 These are the hands that built the ships
 Which vivid Helen's face sent forth.
 And the dark, Babylonian slave beside
 The rivers where we wept when we remembered Zion,
 Who hanged our harps without our hearts
 In willows weeping by.
 It is all the death of ages. Graveyard of a sacred race.

Black people have continued to inhabit my work in the fifty years since, and only recently was I offered a useful new view of their role in my narratives. In the spring of '98, I was giving a reading in St. Paul, Minnesota at Macalester College in a handsome all-glass chapel; and I noticed sitting on

the aisle, far back, a woman whom I'd met in my last previous reading in the area, a middle-aged black American woman. She'd come up to speak to me after that previous visit, and she'd looked so familiar that I said to her "Don't I know you?" She said "No, you don't"; and I said "Gosh, I wish I did"—she's a striking person. I hadn't seen her since that first meeting, but here she was again. I'd got all the way through the question-and-answer session, and she hadn't said a word. I thought maybe I'd said something wrong; maybe she didn't like this new novel, which describes a very complicated relationship between an old white woman and an aging black woman.

In any case, I said to the audience "Is there one last question?"; and the woman's hand went up. I thought "Oh what's this going to be?" And she said "Mr. Price, why are there no bad black people in your books?" I said, "Do you know that's so? I'm not sure that's right." She said "It's true." So I said "I hope you're not convicting me of sentimentality." She said "No, I'm just curious." I said "Don't you want to give me a prize?" She said "No." She pursued her question, though—"Why do you show us no bad blacks?" I tried to think of an appropriately intricate answer; but in honesty, I finally had to say something like "I guess it's because I've never met a bad black person. I'm obviously aware that they turn up in the newspapers, getting themselves in trouble like everybody else. But, no, it's been my great good luck not to have had that experience. On the contrary, I've had numerous deeply nourishing experiences. Since that degree of luck hasn't been experienced by some Americans of other extractions, I've perhaps felt impelled to describe and elucidate—both in fiction and in memoir—my experience."

To give you a single glimpse of the kinds of richness African-Americans have offered to me and to the whole world around me—and I assume to the world in which we all live—I'd like to read to you one very short story. It's one I wrote maybe ten years ago. The black woman at its center is entirely invented—so far as the action of the story is concerned, that is—but in other respects the ancient central character is closely based upon a particular woman named Mary Green, from Macon, N.C.

Macon is in Warren County, the town I was born in. My maternal grandparents—John Egerton Rodwell and Elizabeth White Rodwell—married and built their home in Macon in about 1884. Mary Green was also then a full-grown woman. She soon came to work for my grandparents and stayed with them for years. In her very old age, when she must have been near a hundred, Mary said to me "When I used to work for Mr. Jack and Miss Liz, I walked from away up by the river every morning—a dollar a week." Given her maturity, the chances are strong then that Mary Green was born into slavery; yet her courage and wit and her phenomenal endurance—not the perhaps-more-likely bitterness—were enormous living gifts to my childhood

and right on through till I was nearly thirty.

In my memoir *Clear Pictures*, I published a snapshot I'd taken of her back in about 1959. I'd stopped off one Sunday afternoon to see her. She was out in front of her ruinous house with just an old slack cotton dress on, and the dress was covered with safety pins. They didn't appear to be joining folds or parts of the dress together. They were just *present*. So I said "Aunt Mary, what are the pins for?" She looked with some impatience at my obtuseness and said "In case I need a pin!" (the fact that she didn't add the word "fool" can only have been a response to my dumb affection). When I next said "What have you been doing with yourself?" she said "I picked a hundred pounds of cotton day before yesterday." A hundred pounds of cotton! Try weighing a pound of cotton; it's about this roomful of cotton! Well, the following story comes out of Mary Green's lifelong brand of gift—a strength as usable as any iron bar. It's called "Two Useful Visits."

Back then your kin could lean down on you with the weight of the world and still not quite say "Get yourself up here to see Mary Greet; she's dying fast, and it's your plain duty." So in mid-February of 1960, on the floor of my own despair, I got a postcard from my cousin Anna Palmer. It said "Aunt Mary is sinking fast and speaks of you." I changed my plans for the next Sunday and made the two-hour drive to see her through clear warm weather that lifted a corner at least of my spirits.

When I'd seen her last in August '58, Mary claimed to be "somewhere way past my eighties." And though she'd picked sixty pounds of cotton the day before—a great deal of cotton—the pictures of her I took on that visit show a balding head, eyes opalescent with the film of age and the fixed stance of an ancient sibyl, senior to God. So if she was, say, more than ninety in the pictures, then she might very well have been born a slave. Even in those years of frank segregation, I'd never been able to ask her the truth. My older kin never mentioned slavery, as if it were some much-cherished dead loved one, too painful to summon. And I'd hesitated with Mary Greet from a vague, maybe misplaced courtesy—you seldom ask men if they've been in prison. The time had come though. I had a need now, to understand pain, that licensed the probe. I'd ask her today.

When I pulled up by her match-box house, she was out in the yard in a straight-backed chair, apparently searching an old hound for ticks. I knew she wouldn't see me till I got much closer; so I stood by the car and raised my voice, "Aunt Mary, dogs don't have ticks in winter."

She didn't look up and I thought "Now she's deaf." But then she spoke to the dog clearly, "White man claiming its winter, Saul." And when I walked closer, there in her lap was a rusty can with fat ticks swimming in kerosene. I said "Can you tell who I am?"

Still picking at Saul, Mary said "You who you been every day I knowed you."

I admired her skill at staving me off, but I had to keep teasing. "Am I Sam House?" Sam was my younger brother, then twenty-six.

She finally turned her long face toward me and shaded her eyes, "Fool, you

used to be Hilman. Sit down.” That far, she was right—the summer loss of my wife and daughter had reamed me out at thirty-four; but could her eyes really see that well? She pointed to the sandy ground beneath us. It was good enough for Saul; who was I to decline on a warm dry day?

I sat and, since she’d called me a fool, I thought “All right, I’ll ask her right off.” When Saul’s next tick hit the bottom of the can, I said “Aunt Mary, were you born a slave?” For the next still minute, I thought I’d struck her.

But next she let out a dry chuckle. She lifted Saul’s droopy right ear and leaned down, “Tell him, Saul. *You* know.” She faced me again and said “Hilman, you feeling good as you look?”

I said “No *ma’m*” but I felt some ease; and for nearly two hours, we sat in the last of that midwinter spring and asked each other aimless questions about our safe past, both dodging the traps of here and now.

This much came clear, from her answers and my memory. Mary cooked for my mother’s parents from the week they settled here in 1882. And though she retired before I was born, she was in and out of my grandmother’s house all through my childhood. She took the rights accorded her age and always came in through the front door—no knock, just a statement, “It’s nothing but *me*.” Then she’d head for the kitchen and sit by the sink, a new addition since her days there. Most of my kin ignored her politely. They thought they knew all she had to tell. But early she won my affectionate awe. She treated me like the full-grown man I meant to be, that tart and dead-level, that unforgiving whenever I failed.

One morning when I was maybe ten, she asked me a thing no black person had, “Hill, what you meaning to *be*, down the road?”

I said “Aunt Mary, I’m busy right now” and pounded off to start some game.

She said “Here, *sir!*” Then in sight of my mother, she said “You turn your back on this old a soul, and you’ll see a heap of backs turned on you.”

Mother nodded and I stayed in place to say I planned to be a doctor; by then it was already my great goal.

Mary said “No sir, you waited too late.”

Mother smiled behind her and we mutely agreed—Mary was cracked. But of course she was right; and many more times when she sounded wild to other bystanders, she thrust straight fingers deep into my quick.

Even this afternoon in 1960, as I stood to leave, having said nothing about my loss, Mary finally said “When you setting up house and making *your* young uns?”

I said “I’m trying to learn from you—you thriving out here with nothing but a hound and doing grand.” I’d yet to see any sign of poor health.

Saul had loped off an hour ago, but Mary looked for him as though he mattered. Then she found my face again and tried to smile, but her eyes wouldn’t light. “Us mean old women, we free-standing trees—don’t need no trellis to help us climb. I estimate you ain’t that free.” She tried again at the smile and it worked. There were four good teeth.

I gave her five dollars and drove back home, thinking she’d likely be standing free when I’d thinned down from loneliness and vanished.

But late the next August, Anna Palmer phoned me. Calls from Anna were rare as blizzards; and before she finished expressing her delicate worries for me—I was known, in the family, to be still “blue”—I thought “Mary’s dead.” Strictly speaking, I was wrong. Anna said Aunt Mary was on her deathbed and refused to rise. I thought “By the time I drive up there, she’ll rise and be out pulling more cotton.”

No, Mary was in the same one-room shack she inhabited alone long before I knew her. All the windows were covered with old cardboard, but there’d never been a lock on the door, so I’d tapped loudly and then stepped into punishing heat. You could have baked bricks in the palms of your hands, but you couldn’t have seen an inch ahead till you stood in the heat and let your eyes open. The one oil lamp was full but not lit. And as ever in all my visits here, there was no human with her. Today there was even no trace of Saul. She was in the far corner on a narrow cot, under three wool blankets; and she seemed asleep or already dead. But as I stepped toward her, her head tried to find me.

Anna had said that she cooked Aunt Mary two meals a day and spoon-fed them to her and that Roy, Mary’s great-great-nephew, turned up to watch her every few nights and give her milk; she craved buttermilk. So maybe she weighed a scant eighty pounds, but her scalp was bald as any old man’s. And when her mouth gapped open to breathe, I could see that the last four teeth had dissolved. I drew up the chair, “Aunt Mary, it’s Hilman.” She didn’t look up so I said “Hilman House. You resting easy?”

Then the huge eyes ransacked my face and found nothing. But she found the strength to say a fierce “No.”

I thought she meant she didn’t recognize me; so I said “—Rosella Hilman’s son, that you used to like.”

She said “Not so” and waved a spider hand as if to cancel my presence.

I leaned back. But the hand came on, took the edge of my coat and pulled me down, eight inches from her face.

She whispered “They working me to death, Mr. Phipps.”

I thought she said Phipps, though later I recalled a long-dead kinsman named Brownlee Fitts. But I said “No, I’m Hilman.”

If she’d had her old power, she’d have snapped my neck. But she only nagged at my coat again. “You hear what I say and *help* me, else I be laid out dead at your feet by dark today.”

So I said “Mary, where would you rather be?”

She was eager as any child to tell me, “Lord Jesus, in bed. I’m *tired*, man. This last piece of work bout broke my mind—my back broke sometime yesterday.” Both hands were out of the cover now, busy with the work old doctors called “picking,” a reflex act of failing nerves.

I drew off the blankets, smoothed her bunched nightgown, settled her flat. She was light to move as a locust shell, though the only woman I’d touched in months. I smoothed her pillow, a cast-off towel of Anna’s but clean in a linen case. Then I bent and said “Is that any help at all?”

She thought a long time and said “No” again but not as hard. And when I’d sat another half hour, trying to think of anything under the sun but me and the two

I'd lost, I gradually saw that Mary Greet had also gone, from this nearby, with no further plea, command or moan. No one alive had made me the gift of so much trust, though I knew she'd left both me and the world as a girl again, in pain more hopeless than any of mine.

I hope that story helps you see at least that, while I was formed in the progressive 1930s of F.D.R. and the increasingly good public schools of North Carolina—I, and all my work, remain in many ways direct descendants of the Old Order. My nearest kin in the New Order are two nieces (one of whom happily is here tonight). They attended public schools in Raleigh with numerous black students. I was proud of my brother and his wife, who made it possible for both young women to develop their relations with African-Americans.

Their memories will no doubt prove very different from mine, but I strongly suspect that they'll produce rich results in their own time—one niece is a writer, one a painter. I, though—a crucial eight years older than my only sibling, a historian brother—am a survivor of the last generation that comes from that one immensely complicated postwar old world, awful as it was and in some ways glorious as it was; and I'm oddly happy to attest to that origin, here in the presence of a handful of people from the same world, dedicated and devoted as you are to the truth of our history.

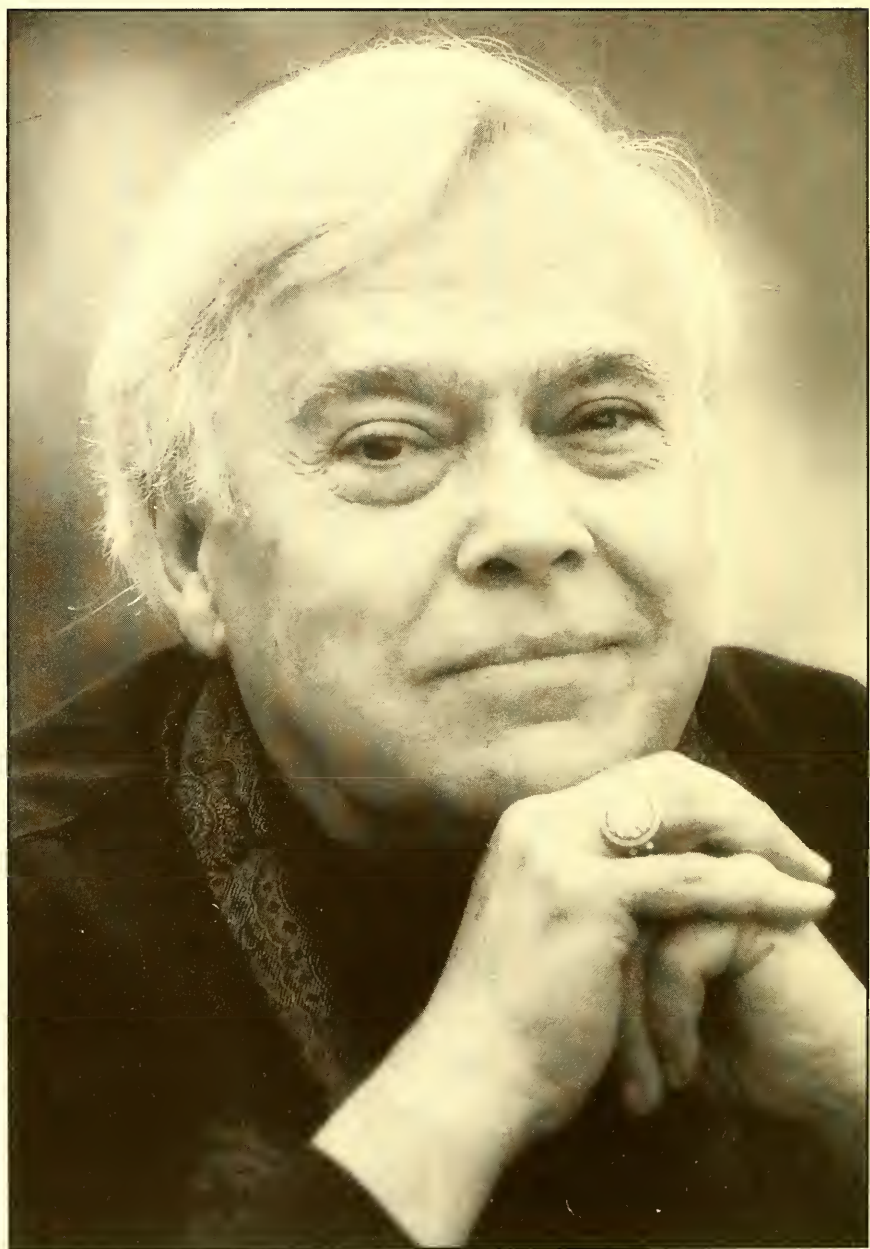


PART II



Tributes to Reynolds Price

*Including Proceedings of a Banquet on the Occasion of His
Acceptance of the North Caroliniana Society Award for 1999
Friday Center, Chapel Hill, 9 April 1999*



REYNOLDS PRICE



Opening Remarks and Introductions

H. G. Jones

Friends of Reynolds Price, Friends of North Carolina Literature:

New Hope Creek has sometimes been called the Maginot Line separating warring basketball forces, but those who drove across it this afternoon may have noticed that the light blue of the south side has mixed with the dark blue of the north side to form royal blue, this in honor of Reynolds Price, who deserves a blue ribbon from every North Carolinian. Those of us in the business of promoting North Carolina literature and culture wonder from time to time what newcomers and outsiders think of the phenomenon of North Carolinians making such a to-do about our writers. The explanation is simple: Whether or not North Carolina produces more or better writers than other states, we certainly value them and honor them for the talents that they so readily share with us, their neighbors. Thomas Wolfe was one of the few North Carolina authors who bought a one-way ticket out of the state, and the twentieth-century literary renaissance in North Carolina is exemplified by Reynolds Price, whose enormously talented pen and pad—and now word processor—continue to produce great compositions within an hour's drive of his roots in the little Warren County community of Macon. North Carolina writers either stay with us or, if they leave, rush back home quickly. Place is indeed important in our lives.

Twenty-one years ago we rechristened St. Patrick's Day "St. Paul's Day" and gave our first North Caroliniana Society Award to Paul Green on his 84th birthday. That was before the advent of the ubiquitous feel-good awards so common today, and the Society has remained faithful to its motto of "substance, not show." The Society does not seek publicity (for example, you did not read about this event in the newspaper), for we want each of our award recipients to be among family and friends. And so tonight, Reynolds,

you are among home-folks, all of whom take great pride in your illustrious career. Thank you for your splendid presentation this afternoon and for letting us share this evening with you. For the information of those unfamiliar with our custom, Reynolds's presentation and the evening's proceedings will be published as a *North Caroliniana Society Imprint* this fall, and you will be mailed a copy.

The North Caroliniana Society Award for extraordinary contributions to the history, literature, and culture of his native state would long ago have gone to Reynolds Price if we could have found a convenient time within his dizzying schedule. Tonight, though, the list of recipients will be enriched by the addition of his name. I want to ask each previous recipient and spouse or widow present tonight to stand and remain standing as the names are called. Please withhold applause. In reverse chronological order: Ann and John Sanders, Hugh Morton, Carlyle Sitterson's Nancy, Archie Davis's Mary Louise, Dewey and Lawrence London, Mary and Jim Semans, Virginia and Bill Powell, Bill Friday—and will all of you turn toward President Broad's table as I remind you that Albert Coates's Gladys will have another birthday on 19 May, and then we will have to wait only three more years for her centennial. [Applause.]

Lest you wonder who's up here on the riser, will each simply wave as I recognize, from my left, Reynolds's brother Bill; his colleague Melissa Malouf; the President of the North Caroliniana Society, Representative, Senator, Justice, and now Dean Willis Whichard; on my right, the prettiest member of the Price family, Bill's wife Pia; Reynolds's former student Robert Odom; our President's wife Leona Whichard; Rob Odom's friend Gregory Tomso—and now, please join in welcoming Reynolds Price. [Applause.]

Enjoy your dinner and table mates.

[Dinner followed. After dinner, the Presiding Officer continued:]

Please continue with your dessert which, for the information of newcomers to the South, is sweet potato pie, just a little touch of Warren County to make Reynolds feel at home.

In the early 1950s, the name Reynolds Price meant little to the World War II veterans attending graduate school at Duke. But the name of Professor Harold Parker was already legendary, and we flocked to his history class. Sitting quietly with us was a handsome youngster, seemingly of high school age but who, before the semester ended, we all recognized as a senior admitted to the class because of his brilliant record. Reynolds, you will remember that Dr. Parker kept describing researching and writing history as "walking on eggs without breaking any." Well, I don't know what he wrote on your term essay, but I am still proud of the note on mine: "I don't see that

you broke a single egg.” Back then, we sat before a master teacher and remarkable human being; now, nearly a half-century later, two generations of students have had similar experiences with another great teacher and man of sterling character, Reynolds Price.

Rob Odom was among those students. Robert Odom grew up in Virginia but went “outside” to study English at Duke. He was a sophomore when he was admitted to Reynolds Price’s creative writing class, and the teacher must have recognized talent and potential because Rob was admitted to two more classes. After graduating, he worked as an editor of novels and literary nonfiction for Algonquin Books. In 1993 he helped launch a general interest magazine, *DoubleTake*, for the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke. He is now an independent writer and editor, and this fall he will enter the Ph.D. program in English at Cornell University. Rob Odom.

[Rob Odom’s tribute begins on page 17.]

Reynolds Price also inspires colleagues. Melissa Malouf earned her Ph.D. in English and American literature at the University of California at Irvine. She came to North Carolina 15 years ago to teach literature and creative writing courses at Duke University, which has honored her with a Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching Award. She has authored a collection of stories called *No Guarantees*, three one-act plays, and two libretti. Her most recent publication is a novel called *It had to Be You: The Joan and Ernest Story*, and she has just completed another novel, *More Than You Know*. She is going to tell us perhaps more than we know about Reynolds Price. Professor Malouf.

[Professor Malouf’s tribute begins on page 19.]

If Bill Price appears fidgety, it is not because he is our final speaker but because I am going to introduce him. You see, I hired that fellow when he was a *child*, and I have lived long enough to see him get his Ph.D. from UNC and to follow his distinguished career as editor, author, and historian, including his *retirement* as my successor as Director of the State Department of Archives and History. Now he has begun a new career as Professor of History at Meredith College. No wonder he looks as old as I do! But he really should be more concerned about how his brother views him, for in an email approving Bill’s participation, Reynolds referred to him as “my favorite (*though only*) sibling.” Professor Price.

[Professor Price’s tribute begins on page 23.]



What I've Learned from Reynolds Price

Robert Odom

I first met Reynolds Price ten years ago when I was a college sophomore. Like other students who had come to Duke with an interest in literature and writing, I had already known Reynolds through his work as a writer and by his reputation among undergraduates as an inspiring and demanding teacher. None of this had prepared me, however, for the actual thrill of participating in some of his classes nor for how that experience would affect my life.

For those of us who were lucky enough to meet him at the tender age of nineteen, Reynolds became an abiding source of inspiration. I remember thinking at the time, "Here is a man who is living life to the fullest with an active devotion both to art and to other people." I've since come to know how difficult it is to do both of those things well without stinting either. But in those days Reynolds made it look easy, and we only wanted to be like him. We were all a little in awe of him—and with good reason.

Anne Tyler has famously written that, during her time at Duke, Reynolds was rumored to wear a black cape with a scarlet lining. In my time, students were more likely to imagine him draped in liturgical robes—a hierophant of mysteries that were sacred and profound. Reynolds is a teacher who commands authority and, as you who have heard him know, he speaks to riveting effect. I've learned a hundred things from Reynolds Price, and I want to share a few lessons I've picked at random. I'd be hard pressed to say which of these fall under the category of "writing" and which fall under "life." Each of them has served me well in both arenas.

¶ Work with characters who are at least as smart as you are.

¶ Don't keep anything from a reader that your protagonist already knows.

- ¶ Dedicate a portion of your income to charitable causes.
- ¶ Spend the rest of your money on art.
- ¶ Never give anyone over forty a present that isn't edible or otherwise disposable.
- ¶ Ninety-nine percent of accomplishing any task is simply sitting glued to one's chair.
- ¶ One lives to regret only one's economies.
- ¶ Every sin deserves sympathy, except one: Never be boring.
- ¶ Never be early, even if you have to drive once around the block.
- ¶ Memorize poetry.
- ¶ Only conclude a day's work when you know how to begin the following day.
- ¶ At some point in your life keep an apartment in Manhattan.
- ¶ Make a home among the people who value you for what you are and never leave it.

Reynolds's home is in North Carolina, and our state is lucky to be able to lay claim to him. He is one of our best resources, both as one of our great writers and in his no less distinguished career as a teacher for over forty years of native North Carolinians and of those outsiders who come to make their home here.

I suppose any teacher must feel bemused to think of what any one student takes from the experience of sitting in on some of his classes. I prefer to think of all those hundreds of young men and women that Reynolds taught over the years as a kind of benevolent constituency of readers. Some of them are now accomplished writers, others work in the arts, some are leaders in business and in their communities, some are raising children who will themselves attend Duke and be able to hear Reynolds read aloud the work of a nineteen-year-old John Milton. I can't help but think that hearing Reynolds Price read *Lycidas* has made all these lives better.

In fact, I can't think of a much better compliment than to say that anytime I read Milton, I think of Reynolds. Except to say that when I think of the most important lessons I've learned in life—how to read, how to write, how to love other people—I think of him, too.





The Whole Hope

Melissa Malouf

My title comes from one of Reynolds's poems, "Quiet Evening," which I'll get to in a few moments. First, I want to think out loud about what I'm doing here on this occasion, about how this relation between myself and Reynolds came to be. I could make this quick and simply say that I love him—but so do all the rest of you. So let me instead try to be a bit more specific as to why this is, for me, a particularly special honor.

For one thing, Reynolds and I have not been lifelong friends. It'll be a couple of years before we can celebrate the tenth anniversary of the meeting of our minds and hearts—but we've been doing our best, despite busy day-and-nighttime schedules, to cram talk and breadbreaking and more talk into these days of friendship we have been given. For another, though I trust I've long since outgrown all embarrassing remnants of having once been a California girl (but maybe have managed to hang onto a few of the good ones) I can't even now, after nearly fifteen delighted years in this neck of the American woods, count myself a daughter of the places whose tones and textures Reynolds so eloquently, so attentively evokes in novel after novel, story after story, poem after poem. I'm a Yankee of sorts: knew the ecological difference, when I got here, between Yucca Valley and Death Valley, but had no idea how much I'd be drawn to wisteria; knew how to ride in a western saddle like a cowboy, but didn't know bourbon from scotch, Texas barbeque from Bullocks', mere good manners from Southern hospitality. I'd never breathed such a pungent spring air nor suffered such sinus headaches because of it. And I couldn't imagine the blessing of this friendship with Reynolds and what it has taught me and continues to teach me. I didn't use to talk much, back then, of blessings, and when I did I didn't mean much more than good luck. That particular change has much to do with Reynolds, and his gift for

praise and thankfulness.

When we first met in the later mid-eighties, I was a new (if not young) kid on the Duke English department's block; Reynolds was returning to work after more than two years of surgeries, tests, therapies, and multiple lessons—some brutal, some brilliant—about how to rethink going on, and doing it well. The thing is, the block had significantly changed while he was away—not gentrified (it was already, in some sense, that) but high-rised, slickened, full of big windows that encouraged onlookers to peer inside and comment on the arrangements and the expense. For both the new kid and the older kid, the changes in the block were consuming for a while—kept us from looking at each other, from paying attention to the stuff that's not so visible, that we talk about (in words that don't quite suffice) as another person's "spirit" or "soul." But how could it be otherwise? So much was happening: it was all unsettling, thrilling, and distracting. There wasn't time—or it was not yet time—for Reynolds and me to take note, to recognize something in each other that would, despite the superficial differences, feel like (and I do not use the next word lightly; it is one of Reynolds's most resonant favorites) "home." That took a while, during which we occupied the same "high-rise" like decent neighbors, but we were simply too preoccupied with all the goings-on—new neighbors coming and going, moving in and out of the "pent-houses," so to speak—to know then about each other what we know now.

I can't claim, as can Rob Odom, that I'm a student of Reynolds's. But in some unofficial sense I am, as are all of us who read him, who listen, who have the privilege of his listening. But I seem to be claiming, with all respect to his brother Bill and other relatives and despite my west-coast origins, some kind of kinship.

That is, I want the believers in former lives to be on to something true, at least true enough so that I might with a bit of legitimacy imagine Reynolds and myself as having been secret-sharing brother and sister back when, or cross-wearing compadres in some worthwhile revolution, or valiant competitors on the same jousting team, even furtive sweethearts during any of the numerous eras when sweethearts were constitutionally furtive—well, why not? After all, when he was in the sixth grade, according to his memoir *Clear Pictures*, he was dressing up as an Arab for Halloween. Why that? And why *Arabian Nights* as one of his favorite childhood books? Was he in some ancient time a Malouf? Reynolds, though your Halloween burnoose was made out of sheets and mine comes from Palestine (a gift from my sister), perhaps you were on to something.

In this former life—let me stick with this for another minute and make the former life fairly recent—Reynolds and I, siblings or maybe cousins, share what we know about boys and girls, girls and boys, and whatever we know doesn't help much at all to soften the anxious, complicated, but always

hopeful stories we make up about the rest of our lives, about how things will turn out. We stay up late worrying not only about boys and girls but about our parents, about dad's income, mom's perseverance, not knowing that we're in fact worrying about their growing up as they are worrying about ours; and we're fretting, constantly, about ourselves, our clothes, our classmates. My brother or cousin Reynolds is too gorgeous by far; I'm too tall to get asked to dance; we are both too solitary and bookish. Yet neither of us—this comes, in part, I think, by having been bookish—is inclined to attempt to hole up, play it safe, as if by doing so we could simply observe what he once called “the wild assortment of the dangers of life” happen to other people.

It is not, however, on the basis of some imagined past life or lives that I'm here tonight to pay small tribute to the large respect and affection I owe my colleague and beloved friend: who takes all of his official duties seriously and takes every opportune occasion to remind his co-workers not to take ourselves too seriously, to be good but not pious. In a poem called “Salamander,” we hear Reynolds's sometimes devilish, always life-enhancing sense of humor:

Have you yet faced west?—northwest
Toward here? Next time, remember to face the ground.
Concede the earth's curve. I might be in Hell.
You might be, from where I face down here.

Grin back. Adore the flame.

Reynolds is as playful as he is mindful and generous, at times a tough cookie but always a cookie. And his contribution to our reading and thinking is not just voluminous, it's wonderfully thought-provoking. What makes a family? What makes us, as participants in family, adhere, rebel, rebel some more, adhere forever? Reynolds keeps reminding us that any answers to such questions that come too easily to mind are not the right answers. What's “home”? As Reynolds tells it, it's both a place (a house, a room, a school, a landscape) and who you were or are in that place; it's both a lover and your own capacity to love. Home is gratitude as well as hunger, even a “fabulous loneliness dense as diamond”—and much more. If you spread your fingers and start to count off those living writers among us who have so arduously—that is, lovingly, passionately—tried to write about what made them, what might have unmade them, what stories lead them home, which “homes” leads to stories, I think you'll have lots of fingers left over, with which you can wave at Reynolds.

Here is the poem that I promised at the beginning. I'm not suggesting that it is typical, that it captures or successfully represents the

complex—so centered and yet so searching—man we honor tonight. But maybe it comes close:

Quiet Evening

Yet here we sit and plan a life—
Or a year of life—with the equanimity
And cool-eyed care of soul for soul
That would have done credit in any century
To two gray Stoics, poor as the poor
But self-possessed as the leanest hermit
Of Patmos and saner. The hopes we bare
With no embarrassment or fear
In words and grins, stops and chuckles,
Are handsomely matched, if high as condors.
Older, I know how literally feasible
The whole hope is. Can you stand to believe it?





Reynolds Price: Baby Brother's View

William S. Price, Jr.

I've talked and written about growing up with Reynolds in a paper published by Methodist College in 1989. [See Sue Laslie Kimball and Lynn Veach Sadler, eds., *Reynolds Price: From A Long and Happy Life to Good Hearts* (Fayetteville: Methodist College Press, 1989).] I'll try not to repeat what I've said there, but there will be some overlap. Bear with me.

Reynolds and I are the only children of remarkable parents: William Solomon Price of Warrenton and Elizabeth Martin Rodwell of Macon in Warren County. Anyone who ever knew them well likewise called them remarkable. Neither of them was formally educated beyond the eleven years of public school required then, but they both were bright, generous, and patient. No married couple ever loved each other more, but that devotion did not lock out others, most especially their sons. Reynolds and I grew up much loved, and we knew it as soon as we knew anything. That certainty was bedrock. Will died when Reynolds was 21 and I 13; Elizabeth when I was 24 and Reynolds 32. I wish they could have seen how much their sons have tried to honor them; Mother at least got a dose of Reynolds's early success and took real pleasure in it.

My wife Pia and I have watched our daughters Marie Elizabeth and Katherine grow into adults who make us proud and happy. Their solid character is one of our deep joys. While raising two daughters has exposed my own shortcomings as a father, it has also helped me see just how extraordinary our parents were. And all before Dr. Spock or any of his kind! I have never achieved Will and Elizabeth's openhanded generosity and never will. It's not that they were saints; both of them loved the world too much for that. They took what life offered and mostly welcomed it.

Modern techniques of child-rearing were not practiced by our parents.

I was often put down for my afternoon nap not with some sweet lullaby but a rollicking chorus of "Bell-bottomed Sailor" sung by Elizabeth. I was spanked (with one exception always by Mother) when I deserved it—like the time a playmate and I dropped the Episcopal rector's son down the coal shoot at the Hotel Warren. On Christmas Eve 1946, Will appeared at my bedroom door to say that he had just heard on the radio that Santa Claus had been run over by a train at Warren Plains. I spent some restless moments asking myself whether this could be true or whether (as was more likely) Will was testing me with one of his famous, unnerving jokes. Sure enough, Christmas morning proved that Santa was alive and bountiful as always. Clearly, Will had decided I was ready for the kind of tricks he played on others. I wasn't a baby anymore.

It is difficult to come up with stories about Will and Elizabeth that Reynolds hasn't told somewhere in his work. The ones I just gave you are not in print, nor is the one I am about to tell—my younger daughter's favorite story of the grandmother she never knew. Nothing else gives Elizabeth's measure better. During the Christmas break from Duke in late 1961, I came home about midnight to our house in Raleigh. I had spent most of the evening on a date with Pia in Durham. As I walked upstairs, I could see Mother's bedroom light on. She was propped up reading well past her normal "lights out." I walked in to say goodnight; Elizabeth looked straight at me: "Son, this thing with Pia seems to be getting right serious." I paused a few seconds and spoke truth: "Yes, Mother, it is." —"You're both mighty young." She was right; I was 20, Pia 18. Then I asked, "How old were you when you knew you loved Daddy?" Her face spread into a wide grin; "18" she laughed, and from that time on welcomed Pia openarmed.

Reynolds and I got along pretty well as boys. The eight years between us helped, and having our own bedrooms was important too. His bedroom was always a tiny museum (still is, but bigger) with wondrous objects, pictures, and smells. Not like the current "professional ideal" of a museum that keeps visitors at a safe distance and tells them what to think, but like the "old-timey" museums of my boyhood where you might see at close hand a two-headed frog right next to a rusted Confederate bayonet. Early on I knew there was magic in such things. Despite my more than three decades around museum professionals and knowledgeable amateurs, Reynolds remains the most astute collector I've met.

Those of us who've read Reynolds's work know that he has given us plenty: novels, stories, plays, translations, memoirs, essays, poems. He publishes most of his writing, but I'll share with you tonight a poem never before in print. In the summer of 1959 I was working in Warrenton having just graduated from high school. Reynolds was on break from teaching at Duke and working on his first novel in Durham. The big event of the

summer was the world heavyweight championship fight between North Carolina-born Floyd Patterson and a young Swede named Ingemar Johansson. I bet Reynolds that Patterson would win, but the big Swede took their first match. I mailed off my \$5 (a hefty part of my \$25-a-week pay) without looking back. By return mail though, Reynolds sent my money along with the following poem:

Put this in your pocket,
Or buy your girl a locket;
And if you can't find a nice, cool breeze,
Take her to the Tastee-Freeze.

Reynolds Price—Rhodes Scholar, James B. Duke Professor, prize-winning author—and Tastee-Freeze? You bet. We Price boys are famous for our appetites whether at a five-star restaurant or the Shoney's breakfast buffet. Pia still recalls with astonishment being with Reynolds in the Intensive Care Unit at Duke after major surgery when the dinner tray arrived. He polished off the weak broth provided and then consumed the concrete Jello on the plate without a pause. All this mind you within hours of a serious operation.

Among living writers, Reynolds is my favorite. I don't say that entirely out of loyalty; his work would engage me had we never met. That I recognize many characters and locales heightens my pleasure, but it is the sensuousness of his writing that draws me—sights, tastes, textures, sounds, smells. And he portrays the miraculous in ways I can grasp and believe.

Over the past two months I've been preparing myself to teach a course in the Italian Renaissance to a group of Meredith students in Tuscany this summer. My recent reading has reminded me that most of the great artists of the time came from tiny villages. Now I'm not so audacious as to compare modern Warren and Iredell counties to Renaissance Tuscany and Umbria, but ponder this: What in Nature conspired to give us a Reynolds Price and a Doris Betts at the same time? A special alignment of the stars? Country ham? Good teachers? Devoted parents? The Whiz Kids on the radio? Future biographers will give you plenty of reasons. Scientists will analyze the chemistry of the creative process and derive complicated equations. But the mystery of human creativity will persist despite the ardor of scholars to dispel it.

Let's just be grateful, as I most surely am, that we get to witness it.





Presentation of the Award

Willis P. Whichard, President of the Society

It is almost a shame to follow Bill's remarks for any reason, but I do have the honor, as president of the Society, to present the North Caroliniana Society Award for 1999 to Reynolds.

The two-handed that you see before you is the result of the Society's decision in 1991 to give to John and Ann Sanders the task of selecting a tangible symbol of the North Caroliniana Society Award. This is not just "another" cup; it already had a distinguished history connecting the family of Thomas Jefferson with that of Calvin Coolidge. The story, too lengthy to be repeated at this hour, will be found in the Society's annual report for 1990-1991. The trophy was appropriately engraved with the wording, "The North Caroliniana Society Award for distinguished contributions to North Carolina history and culture." Then, to provide its proper exhibition in the North Carolina Collection, John and Ann designed and arranged for the crafting of a handsome mahogany stand, together with silver plates on which the names of recipients are engraved. The entire ensemble graces the North Carolina Collection's Reading Room. Tonight, however, you are privileged to see the cup and its upper base on the table in front of us.

John and Ann also selected modest sterling cups, one of which is appropriately engraved and presented to each recipient. The simplicity of the cup is emblematic of the North Caroliniana Society's dedication to "Substance, not Show," the most essential quality we seek in each year's recipient.

This year's recipient, like those before him, epitomizes substance over show. Reynolds, please accept this cup as a symbol of the Society's award and make such remarks as you choose.



Acceptance of the Award

Reynolds Price

My parents were native North Carolinians; their parents were, their grandparents and great-grandparents. I suspect you'd need to search back into the early nineteenth century to find one of us who'd even admit to being from southeast Virginia. We—my dear brother and I, here with you—are compounds of Welsh, English, Scottish, and French Huguenot blood. Those are the known strains, in any case. If the Celtic strains in each of us have prevailed, we make no apology for that—our ceaseless and immoderate tale-telling, our delight in the good tales of others, and our extremely rare but fierce-tempered storms of self-assertion may well be the liveliest things to know about us.

To speak of myself now, with the exception of four years spent in England in the 1950s and early Sixties, I've lived here all my life. The first eighteen years were more or less constrained by my parents' choices. In fact, so devoted an infant and boyish Tar Heel was I that I was compelled to live—with my family and without effective complaint—under some fourteen different roofs before I was fourteen years old. My admirable but restless parents took me from Macon (where I was one of the last white Anglo-Saxon children actually born at home) to Warrenton, to Henderson, to Roxboro, to Asheboro, back to Warrenton, and on to Raleigh. Then with the open-handed help of the Dukes, I moved on to Durham for four years of college; and here I returned in 1958, after the British years. I trust it won't occasion excessive cries of outrage or delight if I reveal tonight that I actually taught for one entire semester—the spring term of 1965—as writer-in-residence here at UNC-Chapel Hill, and a fine time it was.

I'd like to think that tonight's most welcome award takes notice, chiefly, of the forty-one ensuing years in which I've lived hereabouts, first, by

devotion and choice and, secondly, because I haven't been able to imagine living elsewhere for more than a week at a time. Whatever angels and demons, whatever genetic engines, have powered my steady work through that time, they've all required that I live and write here—on a rural road in Chapel Hill Township in Orange County midway between two great universities—with my good ear pressed to the hard ground and my eyes fixed on beech trees and pine, on deer and foxes, racoons and possums, herons and hawks, indiscourageable beavers, renewed wild turkeys, and human beings by the endless hundreds, capable like their brothers and sisters on the entire planet of every manner of love and refusal, blank-faced felony and unspeakable generosity. Why turn elsewhere for any other sight? God's plenty is *us* and I still feed on it.

In the hopes of years more of sane life here, I'd like to read you a single poem I wrote, not long ago, about my birthplace. That particular house still stands in Macon, built—as I told you earlier—by my maternal grandparents John Egerton Rodwell and Lizzie White Rodwell in the 1880s and lived in now by a thriving family of Mexican farmers. Though it's been thirty-some years since I stepped inside it, the house lives for me still as haunted ground—benignly haunted: a feeling I've hoped to validate in these few lines.

Spring Takes the Homeplace

A long wet winter since I saw the house
Pounded hard by August sun—
Choked in stands of waist-high grass,
The lumber scrap of renovation—
And even now, all I have is pictures:
A cousin's color-snaps last fall.
The grass is scythed, the scrap hauled off,
The view from the window where I saw light
That bleak first day is clear again—
Straight sight to the road I took to leave
More or less for good, barring childhood visits
To Ida, not the place (Aunt Ida, saint
Of my saint-strewn life).

It's stood through
Three snows, hard sleet, the quick reversal
Of a ten-year drought—empty still,
No tenant yet. At least I've heard
No word of fire; so it must stand
Or crouch (*crouch* or *lie?*)—snoozing snake
Laid on the long lot, digesting its century
Of food: our lives (Rodwells, Drakes,
Prices, Rowans, Huffmans, Swifts).

None of us there to meet the spring,
Throw the doors wide on green-gold light;
And acknowledge the silent service of walls,
A good tin-roof, and heart-pine floors
Through hateful cold.

So from this distance—
Eighty miles—I grant its virtue,
Grant our thanks (living and dead).
And these eyes roam the yard in memory,
Hunting a bloom to deck the door.

Ida's roses were long since blighted
To thorny sticks, razed and burned.
The rows of annuals long since a wilderness,
Only the tall old fig survives—
Backed against Buck Thompson's shed
(Where he stored the coffins he sold, a sideline
With sweet potatoes and brightleaf tobacco).

Life creeps up dry spongy pith
Of limbs that still bear pounds of figs
For cardinals now or cocky jays,
The sticky milk of ancient sap—
Loyal, punctual, undeterred.
No leaves yet, no fruit till August.

But from here, in mind, I break a stick;
Wait for the sweet milk; smear my hand
With its proof of lasting, in a long straight line
(Opalescent, warm in the cool day);
Bear that to the front door, press the hand
To a brass knob turned by all my kin
Through a hundred years. The door breaks open
At last.

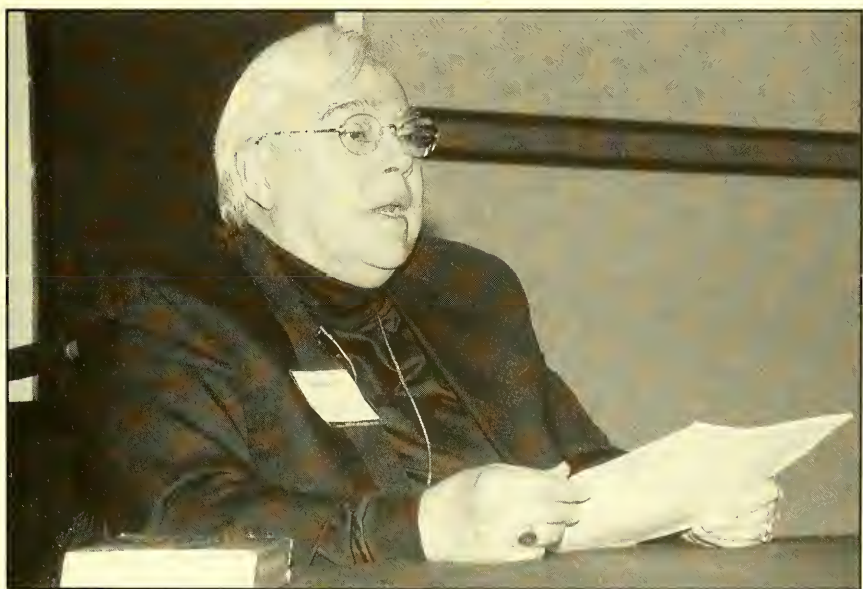
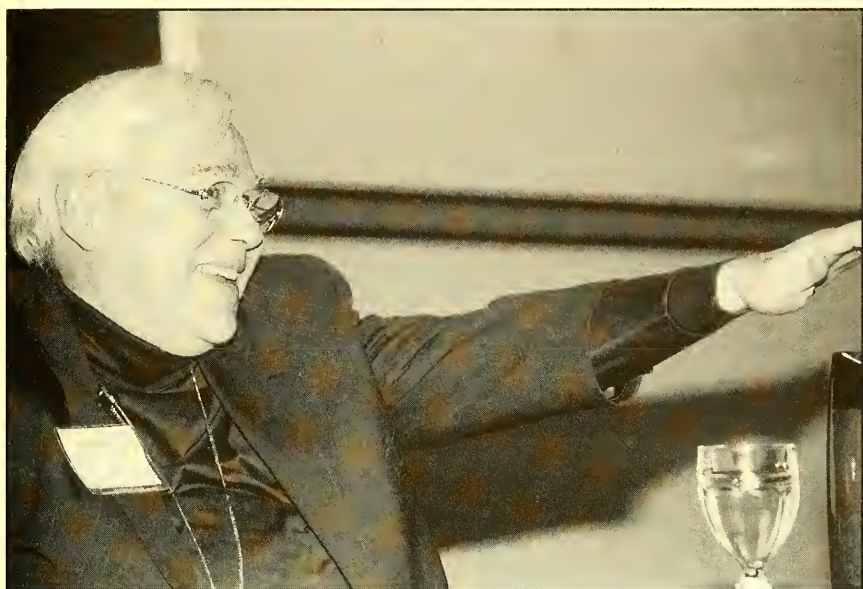
Spring light! Now rush on past me.
Flood the rooms.





NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY AWARD RECIPIENTS

1978	<i>Paul Green</i>	1990	<i>Burke Davis</i>
1979	<i>Albert Coates</i>	1991	<i>Lawrence F. London</i>
1980	<i>Sam J. Ervin, Jr.</i>	1992	<i>Frank H. Kenan</i>
1981	<i>Sam Ragan</i>	1993	<i>Charles Kuralt</i>
1982	<i>Gertrude Sprague Carraway</i>	1994	<i>Archie K. Davis</i>
1983	<i>John Fries Blair</i>	1994	<i>H. G. Jones</i>
1984	<i>William C. & Ida H. Friday</i>	1994	<i>North Carolina Collection</i>
1985	<i>William S. Powell</i>	1995	<i>LeRoy T. Walker</i>
1986	<i>Mary D.B.T. & James Semans</i>	1995	<i>J. Carlyle Sitterson</i>
1987	<i>David Stick</i>	1996	<i>Hugh MacRae Morton</i>
1988	<i>William McWhorter Cochrane</i>	1997	<i>John L. Sanders</i>
1989	<i>Emma Neal Morrison</i>	1998	<i>Doris Waugh Betts</i>
		1999	<i>Reynolds Price</i>



Reynolds Price greets and speaks to audience prior to the Award Banquet on 9 April.



At the Award Banquet: H. G. Jones presiding; Rob Odom speaking for former students; Melissa Malouf representing Duke colleagues; William S. Price, Jr., sharing brotherly memories; RP sharing a moment with sister-in-law Pia Price; President Whichard presenting the award; RP making acceptance remarks; and a standing ovation.



RP greeting friends: Willis Whichard; Rosemary Roberts; David and Sandy Williamson. President Molly Broad attends her first meeting and chats with Frieda and David Bruton and husband Bob Broad; Ron Holland and Betty Ray McCain; John Sanders and Ed Yoder; Willis Whichard; and Bob Anthony.



Friends with friends: Bob Scott and Ed Hodges; George-Anne Willard, Matt Brown, and Bill Price; Pat Devine and Allan Gurganus; Virginia Powell, Barbara Garrison, and Rachel Malcolm; Bill Blythe and Gladys Coates; Ron and Kathy Holland and Rita Cashion; Willis Whichard and Bill Johnson; Ed Yoder and Bob Mason.



More friends: Wallace Kuralt, Hugh Morton, and Brenda Kuralt; Scott Parker, Pat Divine, and Melissa Malonf; Frances Weaver and Ed Yoder; Bill Friday and Hugh Morton; Wesley and Carolyn Wallace; Hugh Morton and Jo and Ray Dawson; Mary and Bill Joslin; Todd Bailey and Gladys Coates.



*An Interview with
Reynolds Price and William S. Price, Jr.
25 March 1996*

[This is an edited transcription (with some liberties) of an interview conducted at a meeting of the Friends of the Library at Meredith College, Raleigh, North Carolina, on 25 March 1996. The subjects are brothers Reynolds Price (RP) and William S. Price, Jr. (WP), and the interviewer is Jean Jackson (JJ), Vice-President for Student Development, Meredith College. The interview was punctuated frequently by laughter. The original audio recording is in the Meredith College Library, which kindly gave permission for the publication of this transcript made by H. G. Jones and approved by the subjects.]

JJ: We are delighted to have these gentlemen with us not just because they are prominent in their careers but because they are brothers. The family is of prime importance for those of us who grew up where "Who's your daddy?" was asked more frequently than "How're you doing?" I am familiar enough with these families to know that their stories are so often retold as to approach mythic proportions. So I wonder if we could begin with a favorite story that each of you likes to tell about the other?

WP: There are so many that I don't know quite where to start.

RP: I do.

WP: I guess it really begins with something that I don't recall but has been recounted to me so many times that I still bear the scars of the incident whenever I attempt to raise my arms over my head.

RP: That's my story. I'll tell the true version.

WP: So I'll let that one go. I'll tell you one that I do remember. I was, as you can see from photographs, a rather handsome child, and by the age of three or four I had quite glorious curls, sort of blondish brown, and also something of an accomplished soprano voice. Reynolds could play the piano, since he had taken by age eleven or twelve what seemed to be about twenty years of piano lessons. We would often be called upon to entertain at

various gatherings at which I would pass the hat after each performance, I having sung and Reynolds having played, and the hat would be filled to overflowing in appreciation for my performance. Reynolds would always take me aside afterward and split up the earnings; I was too young to keep count, but I am sure it was a fifty-fifty split.

RP: I'll tell an earlier story. When Bill was about eight weeks old—he had almost starved to death in infancy because Mother had tried to breast-feed him but was inadequate to that challenge—the only pediatrician in Asheboro at that time did not realize that he was starving; but since he was crying, wailing forty-eight hours a day, the rest of us knew something was wrong. So we decided to take him to Greensboro to the famous Dr. Keith, a pediatrician of great renown. We had Bill laid out on the living room floor waiting to go. Loving brother Reynolds leaned over him, trying to stop that incessant wailing of the starving blue child. I extended two fingers to him, and with his last grams of strength he grabbed them. I thought that was encouraging, so I kept pulling, and I got him virtually off the floor when all of a sudden there was a clunk and both arms went out of joint. He stopped crying at least. It was such a switch for us all. Still, we drove him all the way to Greensboro, and it's since been told that it was my attempt to paralyze my baby brother. As you see, I failed, but he succeeded with me.

JJ: Tell us something about life with those Rodwells and Prices in Macon and Warrenton when you were little boys. Reynolds, you have written about this in *Clear Pictures*, and I wonder if you could tell us about growing up in Macon, sitting on that wonderful front porch at your grandparents' house, listening to stories, watching the trains go by, and being smack between the Baptist and Methodist churches. And Bill, could you tell us something about your high school summer jobs in Warrenton, especially the one that you had with Mr. Poindexter.

RP: I've written a fair amount about those almost entirely unblemished years. I can barely remember an unhappy or untoward episode associated with Macon. My grandfather had built the house, that is still there, in about 1884 or 1885, and I was one of the last middle-class, white children born at home in North Carolina. It was rather unfortunate for me and my mother, who went through ghastly labor and should have been at Watts in Durham, the nearest full-service hospital. But I did survive and spent a good deal of my first two years in Macon before my father began looking for jobs during the Depression and taking us to several places—Henderson, Roxboro, and on to Asheboro for a long stint before we moved back to Warrenton for a three-year stint before moving on to Raleigh in 1947. In North Carolina, certainly in the Piedmont North Carolina that I know of, that life is effectively dead—a life of immense quiet and serenity, in country and rural settings. Macon was a village of about 150 people in our childhood; it still has about

150 people, but we know very few of them anymore; and no close member of our family lives there any longer, since you can't persuade a child to stay. I can't blame them, but I do wish that someone who isn't dying would decide to stay. Although we generally lived elsewhere in the state, Macon and Warrenton, which was our father's home town, very much remained our magnet. We were really just camping out in Henderson, Roxboro, and Asheboro; and for any significant occasion, we took the rickety automobile of those days, and the very thin tires of those days, and the limited gasoline available under rationing in World War II, and streaked up to Macon and Warrenton, where we were, insofar as I can tell, received without qualm and fed unbelievably bountifully; then left with the car loaded with food to take home. In those days many houses didn't have telephones, and ours in Macon did not, so we communicated by Western Union wire. Our grandfather had once been the station master in Macon; but in our childhood it was a Mr. Rochelle, who received communications on the telegraph key. Our grandfather had won many contests because he could send with one hand and receive with another, but Mr. Rochelle was not such a virtuoso, and Mother once sent a telegram to Aunt Ida saying, "Will arrive in time for supper." When it got there, it read, "Will arrive in time for supplies." Aunt Ida conceded that it was more truth than poetry. Our uncle Stooks once went off and left his sport coat in the wardrobe when he left for Norfolk, where he worked with the Seaboard Railroad (as all our maternal family did). He wired home, "Don't bother to send the coat; just send my pass from the jacket pocket." I won't tell you how the telegram read when Mr. Rochelle delivered it. But for the two of us, those days were a form of heaven; and they still are in my memory.

WP: One of the great pleasures for me in *Clear Pictures* is the accurate picture that is left for my daughters of a very special time. Reynolds's description of our grandfather's ability to send and receive messages simultaneously brought to mind another character in Macon, Mr. Andy Brame, who lived right across the railroad from the Rodwell place. Mr. Brame would sit on his front porch, and as the freight train would pass his house, Mr. Brame (who owned a store and farmed as well) would keep a running count of the tonnage that would appear on the side of the rail cars. He was known far and wide as "Mr. Brame, the Lightning Calculator." Well, our cousin, Caswell Drake, went off to Trinity College, where he met a lovely young lady from Greensboro, Mildred Michaux, whom he subsequently married, but during their engagement Caswell brought Mildred from Durham to Macon to meet the family. Of course, as a part of the attractions of Macon, Mildred was taken over to Mr. Brame's front porch. When the freight train came racing through for the afternoon, Mr. Brame started counting. After the train passed, she was asked, "Well, Miss Michaux, did you ever see anything so remarkable?" Mildred turned to Caswell and asked, "How does anybody

know if he is right?" The Lightning Calculator never calculated publicly again.

RP: Mr. Brame was noted as a miser also, very close with his money. He used to buy all the women's clothes in the family. One day he came home, having found a tremendous bargain in Oxford. He had bought a barrel of identical hats and a barrel of identical corsets, and the women of the family wore them for the next twenty years. When it rarely snowed in Macon, he would melt snow rather than draw water from the well.

WP: The summers of my junior and senior high school years and freshman college year I spent in Warrenton with my father's sister, Martha Reynolds Price Poindexter and her husband Gordon in their grand home, which Uncle Gordon referred to as "Bourbon Hall" for some reason. But two or three nights a week I would go to Macon to visit my Aunt Ida, whom both Reynolds and I called "Ducker." In those summers my mother's sister Louise Rodwell Rowan would come up from Union, South Carolina, to spend the summer. I had grand times with them. One of the real pleasures of that time was that I got to know my father's sisters in ways that I had not known them when I was a boy. We were so drawn to the warmth and hospitality of the Rodwells at Macon that we had tended to avoid the somewhat stiff or formal Prices of Warrenton, but I learned that summer that they were made of some very fine stuff, and were people of enormous wit as well. Our aunt Louise Rowan, who was the oldest of my mother's sisters, had only one specialty. Ida was a great cook; Louise simply never acquired any talents in that regard, but she did make the tea. Otherwise, she served as the entertainment committee, and that she could do very well.

RP: Louise was the only person I ever knew who had this linguistic trick that she played. She would take a cliché and add a word which would make it tremendously fresh and wonderful. During the Depression, her husband, who was coming down with a brain tumor and was going blind, was going broke with a little grocery store that he was trying to run in the town of Robbins (then called Hemp). As I was playing on the floor at age five, Mother said to Louise, "Well, there's one thing: they can't get blood out of a turnip." Louise replied, "No, but they can put the turnip in jail." At about the middle of June, everybody would start sweating, and someone might say "Whooo, I'm as hot as a mink"; but Aunt Louise would say, "I'm as hot as a mink in Africa." We might say "She's as ugly as a mud fence"; but Aunt Louise would say, "She's as ugly as a mud fence daubed in misery."

WP: I can't top that, but I do have another memory of Louise on a front porch visit during the summer. Someone commented to Louise, "You know, that's an unusual looking moon," to which she replied, "I wouldn't know; I'm a stranger in these parts."

RP: Louise would bring home a dress on approval from Pridgen's, the only dress shop in Warrenton; and she'd sit on the porch and virtually take

it apart, strengthening all of the seams and buttons. Then she'd decide that she'd take it back. Aunt Ida would say, "Louise, you can't take that back; you've taken it apart." Louise would reply, "Well, whoever gets it will get a heap sight better dress than I did."

JJ: It is hard to believe that you all would move away from Warren County. But you mentioned that you moved with your parents to Raleigh in 1947. Tell us about Raleigh in those days.

RP: We were in hog heaven the moment we arrived in Raleigh. We had known Raleigh as a place to visit, for our father had worked here, and our parents would occasionally bring us to Raleigh to eat at the S & W Cafeteria (the best food in memory) and take us to a movie at the State or the Ambassador or the Wake Theatre. We'd stay in the Carolina Hotel; or occasionally when the Carolina was full, we'd stay in the Mansion Park Hotel, the old residence of Meredith College. So we thought of Raleigh as a great metropolis and a grand place, and for me it was just as happy a place to live as Macon and Warrenton—even better than Warrenton, for my years there didn't go very well, but I was an adolescent then, and nobody's adolescent years go very well. Raleigh was a city of about 50,000 in those days, the City of Oaks, and appropriately leafy, shady, and lovely, with an excellent public transportation system. We lived way out Glenwood on Byrd Street beyond Hayes Barton and could in fifteen minutes get downtown for a nickel on the city bus. Broughton High School was only ten blocks or so away, and that was a magnificent place. Bill started school in Raleigh when I was in the ninth grade. Patricia Alphin, who is here tonight, and her family were half a block down the street from us; and I think they probably agree that we had a kind of community on that street that in my mind is unrepeatable today, a kind of world of great peace. The only threat was polio, and it was a serious threat; we knew a child or two at Broughton who had polio. When the Hayes Barton pool was closed in summer, we simply holed up on Byrd Street and played bridge and danced, good unBaptist sports in those days, to which my father, a devout Baptist, turned a blind eye. We loved our lives.

WP: Raleigh was a wonderful place to come to and to grow up in, and despite what has happened to it in recent years, I still think that it is a delightful place in which to live and bring up a family. I am delighted that our two daughters grew up in a neighborhood very much like the Byrd Street that we grew up in. I live over in the 3000 block of Mayview Road very close to this campus, and it is a wonderful neighborhood to be a part of and to grow up in. One of the things that I remember in growing up in Raleigh in the late '40s and early '50s is that, though we did have a fine public transportation system that would take us around for a nickel, my friends (like Buddy Crumpler, who is now an attorney) and I could ride our bicycles all the way down to the Ambassador Theatre, park our bicycles without a lock, go in,

watch a double feature, then come out and ride home. We were doing that right up to the time when no self-respecting adolescent would be seen on a bicycle. So Raleigh was still that kind of a calm environment until the early years of the 1950s. That was a very, very pleasant kind of environment to be in. Of course, the great difference—and Reynolds has written about it—was that we all lived in a segregated society. I never went to school with anybody who was black, including four years at Duke University, 1959-1963, until I went to officer candidate school in the Navy. So, there was a price that society paid for that kind of lifestyle, but it was a grand time to be young, and I have very, very wonderful memories of all of it.

JJ: In those days, teachers had profound influence on all of us. One of the teachers you shared, Phyllis Abbot Peacock, has twelve life memberships in the Friends of the Library and thus is almost immortal. Would you talk about Mrs. Peacock the teacher and Mrs. Peacock the ally.

RP: Claire Freeman, who was at Broughton at that time, can add stories on top of ours. I was in my sophomore year when Mrs. Peacock came to Broughton. I didn't have her course then, but I met a biology class in the room that she had just left each day. I remember the chagrin of our biology teacher, one of the few male teachers that I ever had in public school; for he'd have to walk in and see all of this colored writing on the blackboard—mottos like "Courage," "Never say die," and other ringing exhortations, with the added admonition, "Do not erase." Poor Mr. Plyler would attempt to teach his class with this tiny little bit of blackboard that was left. Thus I had a considerable dread of encountering this person in junior English, which was coming up; but I did, and it was certainly a very Rubicon experience for me. My life was altered in a benign way at that point largely because of Phyllis Peacock, for up to that point—what was I, fifteen?—I'd been dead certain for many years that I was going to be a painter, a drawer and a painter (and I still do a lot of painting). But by the time I reached Phyllis's class I'd begun to go to enough museums, to see enough reproductions and beautiful pictures to realize that I would never become a really great painter—I could be a good copyist or commercial artist, but that was the last thing I wanted. So that realization coincided with my beginning to write on assignment from Phyllis Peacock little short pieces of English prose. She'd send us to see Olivier's *Hamlet* or something else and we'd write a two- or three-hundred word response, and she just began to encourage my efforts. The word "no" was inconceivable in her presence. She had that sort of divine madness about her that would be very difficult for a teacher today to bring off in a public school. She was intensely excited about something like poetry which you'd never seen anyone but a Holy Roller excited about. She would carry on about a concert or a movie or a piece she had heard on the radio in a way that you thought was lunatic. She didn't try to imitate children's slang as some teachers now try to

do; she seemed as if she had arrived from Mars about five minutes before. She was so unlike our parents or any other teachers at Broughton that I just decided to fall in love with her and enroll in her program and follow her example for the rest of my life, which in many ways I've done.

WP: I had Phyllis as well my senior year, by which time honors courses were set up, and I was in Phyllis's honors class. I always made my A's with Phyllis, but I knew that I wasn't Reynolds. What I remember in retrospect about Phyllis in that regard is that she never, never held me to his standard and never made me feel like I had disappointed her. She was remarkable in that regard, and, in fact, Phyllis was the one who told me when I was a senior in high school that I ought to think about being a historian. She clearly recognized after several creative writing exercises that there had to be another way for me, but she did it wonderfully and in a way that stuck. I also remember with great fondness her husband Lee, who was the first president of this organization and dean of the college here for many years. Our father died in 1954 when I was thirteen, and Lee really in very sweet ways went out of his way to take care of me. Lee was a great basketball fan, having been an athlete at Wake Forest, and he used to take me to see N.C. State play in those early days when Everett Case was the most exciting coach in the South. Lee would take me into that great new facility that was William Neal Reynolds Coliseum, and I remember that he would always buy the biggest bag of peanuts that the vendor had, and he and I would eat peanuts all during the game. He was remarkably kind to me and I remember the Peacocks with great fondness. And, of course Lee's sister, Carolyn Peacock Poole, was a Meredith graduate as well and taught here for a while; Carolyn was our mother's dearest friend and as sweet a person and as kind a person as anybody would hope to know.

RP: She called up Mother every night. After Bill and I left and Mother was alone, we would go back for a weekend; and when the phone rang around ten o'clock, Mother would say, "That's Carolyn calling to see if I'm dead."

JJ: Both of you are teachers; what besides life do you seek to give to your students and what do they give to you?

RP: I've been teaching, to my astonishment, since 1958, which is more than half of my life; and it has been a source of enormous reward and delight for me. I think what I try to extend to my students in the form of invitation—that is the only way one can extend anything, for one can't teach anything; we must simply invite them to learn—I try to extend to them the two or three great happinesses of my life that I have gotten from books and learning and study and conversation with highly educated, well-read teachers. I try to give them the sense that there's something out there far more enduring and far more deeply enriching and fertilizing and watering than so many of the

faceless nameless magnets that are placed before them in childhood and which draw them down all kinds of roads that aren't worth going down. I don't want to say learning is fun; it's much better than fun. Learning is perhaps the second or third highest pleasure that I know of in the world. Simply exposing a student to someone who believes that intensely, I think, is about as valuable a thing as I can do for them.

WP: I've taught at the college level off and on for nine years. What I have gotten old enough and comfortable enough with myself to do is to try to convey to my students how important history is, and that a man who has stood up this long—fifty-five years—and gotten through some joys and sorrows in life is still standing and still thinks it important that these people have some context for defining themselves. What my students give back to me and what I am so enormously grateful for is their attention and interest and—very rarely—their thanks. I know from my own days as a student how often I failed to thank teachers who were really important to me, and I think if students have any great failing it is that pretty universal failure to express appreciation. I can't blame them for it, because I did not do it myself when I was a student. But the great pleasure that teaching offers is that pleasure of being around young minds and to have to think yourself in ways that you don't think otherwise. One of the reasons that I kept trying to teach my course at N.C. State even after I became director of the largest state historical agency in the country (but was forced to give it up after a year because I was being pulled away for too many other things) was that the classroom kept me engaged intellectually in ways that my job simply did not and could not. So in that sense I am very glad to be where I am right now [teaching at Meredith College].

[Break in tape.]

JJ: Not all of us here are teachers, but we are certainly all readers. Tell us what you are reading now or what you have read recently and would recommend to us.

WP: I recently read a book that my colleague Carolyn Happer gave to me—Russell Baker's *Growing Up*, which I commend to you if you have not read it. It is a grand book by a man eight years older than Reynolds and who was born in the mountains of Virginia and found himself in the throes of the Depression fatherless and with a mother who took him and his sisters to New Jersey to live with a brother and try to make her way through the world. There is a wonderful recounting of his growing up during the Depression, a statement pretty consistent with the kind of stories that I have heard from scores of people, which is that they did not know that they were poor until someone told them. It is a fine story of growing up, and it is an interesting memoir to compare with *Clear Pictures*; I don't think it is as good as *Clear Pictures*, but then I am prejudiced. It does have grand and splendid things in

it and has much of the same kind of feeling as well. It is well worth reading.

RP: One of the problems of being a writer is that when you've finished a full day of writing you don't want to sit down in the evening and read somebody else's writing. It's the sort of busman's holiday that you frequently find yourself avoiding. So if I did not have numerous friends who are themselves publishers of books, I might not read as many books as I do. I read absolutely voraciously throughout my childhood from the age of six on. I came from the generation which did not learn to read at age three; and I'm sort of glad that I did, for I was absolutely starved for words and reading by the time I got to be six years old in Asheboro. I went to the public library and encountered those women of that generation who ran libraries in the Southeast—those dragonesses with buns at the back of their heads with pencils stuck in them, who asked "Why are you taking that out?" and "Who said you could read that?" It seemed that you might as well have been checking out cocaine as far as they were concerned. So I became a tremendous "junkie" immediately, and that went on till the time when I began to spend most of my days writing. I think that the last absolutely marvelous book that I read was Anne Tyler's new novel, *Ladder of Years*. Anne of course grew up in Raleigh and, in fact, just a couple of blocks from me, although she was younger. She grew up with Bill, and she also studied with Phyllis Peacock, whom she still thinks of very fondly. Anne is an absolutely first class writer as you all know, and we should be immensely proud of her, and I wish we could persuade her to leave the city limits of Baltimore occasionally, but she cannot be persuaded to do so now that her parents have left Hayes Barton and gone to Baltimore themselves. I read a lot of wonderful books, but as the years have gone by—partly because I write fiction and avoid reading it whenever I possibly can, and also because of age—I find that if I'm left alone in a room full of books, I will probably pick a biography. I am still fascinated by other people's lives—who they are and who they've been when I wasn't supposed to be looking. I once said to my father when he was driving down Anderson Drive in Hayes Barton—I was about sixteen and I don't know why on earth I said it (because I was a writer and didn't know it)—"People with their shades drawn." He said, "That sounds like a good title for a book."

JJ: As a final question of the evening, I'd like to refer to your parents. Reynolds, you have referred to them as very watchful, phenomenal observers of the world. We who know your work and Bill's work might make the same observation about you both. What observations about pictures of your parents do we see in pictures of your lives; in other words, how are you like them?

RP: Well, we'd rather laugh than eat. But you couldn't tell it!

WP: Like our mother, we love an adventure. Like our father, we have sizable skills at wit.

RP: Like our father, we also know that everybody is going to die in about five minutes. Lots of anxieties.

WP: Phenomenal worriers. My wife Pia can't go shopping without my saying, "If you are going to be later than five o'clock, please give me a call so I'll know where you are."

RP: Otherwise we're sure she's in a Dempster Dumpster somewhere near Greensboro.

WP: I can just hear my father saying that.

RP: He kissed us goodnight every single night of his life. He would come to Bill's room and my room, and I would be in my bed, and Father would say, "Darling, have you said your prayers?" I'd say "Yes, sir," and he'd say, "And you said them on your back, didn't you?" I'd say "Yes, sir," and he would add, "And you went to sleep, didn't you?" and I'd say "I'm not sure, Daddy." He would then kiss us and go about his business, but he would never have dreamt of not doing it because we might have died during the night. And children did die in those days.

WP: That's why I always looked in on my girls too. We both bear the looks of Elizabeth. We are both Rodwellian in looks, and I used to be much more like Mother than Reynolds, although as we have gotten older we look more like each other and therefore he looks increasingly like Mother.

RP: I have a slight mean streak from the Prices that Bill doesn't.

WP: He's never seen it, but I have it too.

RP: The rarest thing: they really never did miss a trick visually. I tell my students that today most Americans are legally blind, and I really mean it. A gorilla could have run through this room in the past ten minutes, and I wouldn't want to tell you how many people here would have been able to describe it when it left. I always tell the illustrative story that once (while serving on a Federal commission) I walked through ten blocks of downtown District of Columbia as Federal employees ate their sandwiches on benches. I was with Clint Eastwood, but not a single person saw Clint Eastwood. Of course, they didn't see me either; but that was secondary. I really think Mother and Father never missed a trick, though. Back in the old days in Asheboro—the '30s and '40s—they would take us out in the car to Main Street and sit there. Bill was too young to ask, but I'd say, "Are we there yet?" When I'd ask what were we doing, Mother would always say, "Looking at people."

WP: Used to do it in Raleigh too on Saturday night. I can't tell you how many times I sat in the car watching the people as they came out of the Ambassador Theatre. That was before television.

JJ: Maybe they were doing "lightning calculation."

RP: You'd be arrested for child molestation if you did it now.

JJ: Thank you for coming tonight and giving us a chance to have as

close to a good long porch visit as any of us have likely had in a long, long time.





Reynolds Price: A Brief Chronology

- 1933 Reynolds Price was born, the son of William Solomon Price and Elizabeth Martin Rodwell Price, on 1 February in the Rodwell-Drake house in Macon, North Carolina.
- 1933-1944 Lived with parents in Macon, Warrenton, Henderson, Roxboro, and Asheboro, North Carolina. Only sibling, William S. Price, Jr., born in January 1941. Attended the first five years of grade school in Asheboro.
- 1944-1947 Lived with parents and brother in Warrenton and attended grades six through eight at John Graham High School, Warrenton. Wrote first serious effort, a Christmas play, in 1946.
- 1947-1951 Lived with parents and brother in Hayes Barton, Raleigh, North Carolina. Attended grades nine through twelve at Needham Broughton High School, graduating in June 1951.
- 1951-1955 Attended Duke University as an Angier B. Duke Scholar. Majored in English, edited the student literary magazine in senior year, and graduated with A.B. degree *summa cum laude*, first in his class and with honors in history, June 1955. Father died in 1954. Wrote numerous poems and three short stories.
- 1955-1958 Studied, as a Rhodes Scholar, at Merton College, Oxford University. Traveled widely in Great Britain and continental Europe. Completed a thesis on John Milton's *Samson Agonistes* and received the B.Litt. degree in the spring of 1958. Wrote poems and short stories.
- 1958-1961 Taught freshman and sophomore English as an Instructor at Duke University. Began and completed a first novel.
- 1961-1962 Returned to Merton College, Oxford, as a guest of the college. Traveled to Italy. Did no academic work but continued writing poems and short stories. In spring 1962

his first novel, *A Long and Happy Life*, was published in Britain and the United States.

1962 & cont'g Taught English at Duke and rose through the ranks to be James B. Duke Professor. Traveled extensively in the United States, Europe, and Israel. Wrote novels, poems, stories, plays, essays, and translations. Mother died in 1965.

1984 & cont'g Diagnosed with malignant spinal tumor, underwent surgery and radiation at Duke Hospital. Experienced permanent paraplegia in the summer of 1984 and has lived and worked since in a wheelchair. Traveled in the United States and England. Wrote numerous further books and continued teaching English literature and imaginative writing at Duke.





Books by Reynolds Price

[For a complete bibliography through 1984, see Stuart Wright and James L. W. West III, *Reynolds Price: A Bibliography 1948-84* (University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1986), 122 pp. Also see note below.]

A Long and Happy Life (a novel: Atheneum, New York, 1962 and later in Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish, French, Italian, German, Polish, Greek, Spanish, Japanese, and Russian. In 1987, the twenty-fifth anniversary of its publication, the novel was reissued by Atheneum in the original clothbound format).

The Names and Faces of Heroes (short stories: Atheneum, New York, 1963 and later in French and German translations).

A Generous Man (a novel: Atheneum, New York, 1966 and later in French and German translations).

Love and Work (a novel: Atheneum, New York, 1968 and later in Dutch).

Permanent Errors (short stories: Atheneum, New York, 1970).

Things Themselves (essays and scenes: Atheneum, New York, 1972).

The Surface of Earth (a novel: Atheneum, New York, 1975 and later in Russian).

Early Dark (a play: Atheneum, New York, 1977).

A Palpable God: Thirty Stories Translated from the Bible with an Essay on the Origins and Life of Narrative (Atheneum, New York, 1978).

The Source of Light (a novel: Atheneum, New York, 1981).

Vital Provisions (poems: Atheneum, New York, 1982).

Private Contentment (a play: Atheneum, New York, 1984).

Kate Vaiden (a novel: Atheneum, New York, 1986 and later in French, German, Danish, Swedish, Portuguese, and Hebrew translations).

The Laws of Ice (poems: Atheneum, New York, 1986).

A Common Room: Essays 1954-1987 (Atheneum, New York, 1988).

Good Hearts (a novel: Atheneum, New York, 1988 and later in Swedish).

Clear Pictures: First Loves, First Guides (a memoir: Atheneum, New York, 1989).

The Tongues of Angels (a novel: Atheneum, New York, 1990).

The Use of Fire (poems: Atheneum, New York, 1990).

New Music (a trilogy of plays: Theatre Communications Group, New York, 1990).

The Foreseeable Future (three stories: Atheneum, New York, 1991).

Conversations with Reynolds Price, edited by Jefferson Humphries (interviews, 1966-1990: University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 1991).

Blue Calhoun (a novel: Atheneum, New York, 1992).

Full Moon and Other Plays (three plays: Theatre Communications Group, New York, 1993).

The Collected Stories (short stories: Atheneum, New York, 1993).

A Whole New Life (a memoir: Atheneum, New York, 1994 and later in German).

The Promise of Rest (a novel: Scribner, New York, 1995).

Three Gospels (translations of the Gospels of Mark and John with a modern apocryphal gospel by Reynolds Price, Scribner, New York, 1996).

The Collected Poems (poems: Scribner, New York, 1997).

Roxanna Slade (a novel: Scribner, New York, 1998).

Learning a Trade: A Craftsman's Notebooks, 1955-1997 (Duke University Press, Durham, 1998).

Letter to a Man in the Fire: Does God Exist and Does He Care? (an epistolary essay: Scribner, New York, 1999).

A Perfect Friend (a novel forthcoming: Atheneum, New York, 2000).

NOTE: *There have been numerous special and limited editions through the years, the contents of which were mostly included in the above listed full-length volumes. Contributions to magazines, newspapers, anthologies, etc., run into the hundreds of items and are listed in the above-mentioned bibliography through 1984 and catalogued to the present in the Special Collections Department of the Duke University Library.*

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Chartered on 11 September 1975 as a private nonprofit corporation under provisions of Chapter 55A of the *General Statutes of North Carolina*, the North Caroliniana Society is dedicated to the promotion of increased knowledge and appreciation of North Carolina's heritage. This it accomplishes in a variety of ways: encouragement of scholarly research and writing in and teaching of state and local history; publication of documentary materials, including the numbered, limited-edition *North Caroliniana Society Imprints* and *North Caroliniana Society Keepsakes*; sponsorship of professional and lay conferences, seminars, lectures, and exhibitions; commemoration of historic events, including sponsorship of markers and plaques; and, especially, through assistance to the North Carolina Collection and North Carolina Collection Gallery of the University of North Carolina Library and other cultural organizations with kindred objectives.

Incorporated by H. G. Jones, William S. Powell, and Louis M. Connor, Jr., who soon were joined by a distinguished group of North Carolinians, the Society was limited to one hundred members for the first decade. It elects from time to time additional individuals meeting its strict criterion of "adjudged performance" in service to their state's culture—i.e., those who have demonstrated a continuing interest in and support of the historical, literary, and cultural heritage of North Carolina. The Society, a tax-exempt organization under provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, expects service rather than dues. For its programs, it depends upon the contributions, bequests, and devises of its members and friends. Its IRS number is 56-1119848. Upon request, contributions to the Society may be counted toward Chancellor's Club membership. The Society administers a fund, given in 1987 by the Research Triangle Foundation in honor of its retiring board chairman and the Society's longtime president, from which more than 150 Archie K. Davis Fellowships have been awarded to scholars conducting research in North Carolina's historical and cultural resources.

A highlight of the Society's year is the presentation of the North Caroliniana Society Award to an individual or organization for long and distinguished service in the encouragement, production, enhancement, promotion, and preservation of North Caroliniana. Starting with Paul Green, the Society has recognized Tar Heels such as Albert Coates, Sam J. Ervin, Jr., Sam Ragan, Gertrude S. Carraway, John Fries Blair, William and Ida Friday, William S. Powell, Mary and James Semans, David Stick, William M. Cochrane, Emma Neal Morrison, Burke Davis, Lawrence F. London, Frank H. Kenan, Charles Kuralt, Archie K. Davis, H. G. Jones, J. Carlyle Sitterson, Leroy T. Walker, Hugh M. Morton, John L. Sanders, Doris Betts, Reynolds Price, and the North Carolina Collection (on its sesquicentennial).

The Society has its headquarters in the North Carolina Collection, the "Conscience of North Carolina," which seeks to preserve for present and future generations all fiction, nonfiction, and poetry that has been or is published by North Carolinians regardless of subject or language and *about* North Carolina and North Carolinians regardless of author or source.

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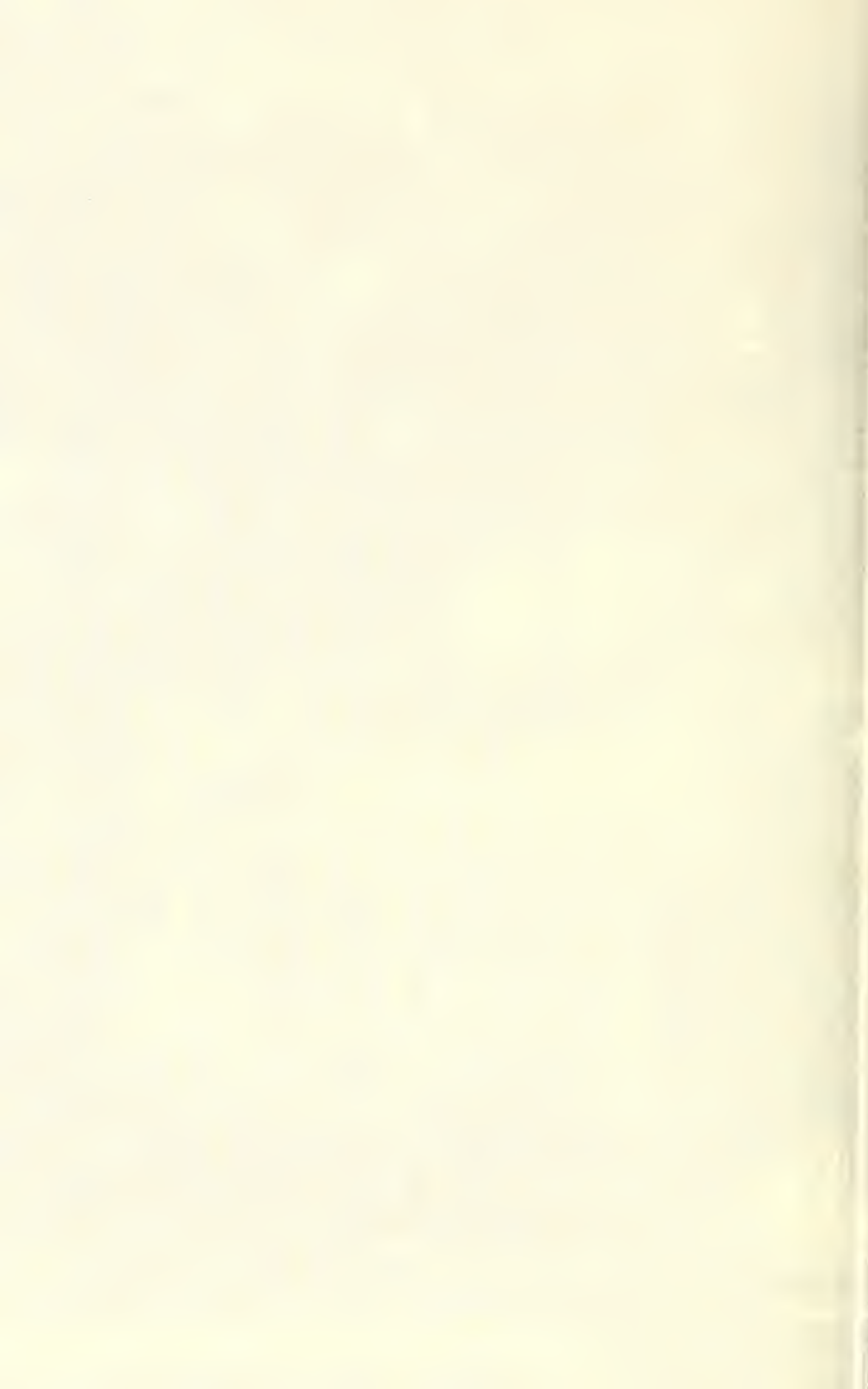
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